



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

April 14, 2008

H.R. 5570 **Religious Worker Visa Extension Act of 2008**

As ordered reported by the House Committee on the Judiciary on April 2, 2008

CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 5570 would have no significant cost to the federal government. Enacting the bill could affect direct spending, but CBO estimates that any such effects would not be significant in any year. In addition, we estimate that enacting H.R. 5570 could increase revenues by less than \$500,000 a year in fiscal years 2009 through 2016. H.R. 5570 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

H.R. 5570 would extend until January 1, 2010, the authorization for special immigrant visas for persons who work in certain religious vocations. In addition, if the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issues regulations by January 1, 2009, to reduce fraud related to these visas, then the bill would extend the authorization for those persons through January 1, 2016. No more than 5,000 of these visas may be granted in each fiscal year.

The Department of State collects fees from persons who apply for such visas from overseas. Under current law, an application fee of \$355 per person is charged by the department and deposited in the Treasury as a revenue. Based on historical data from the Department of State, CBO estimates that the department would process an additional 200 applications annually and that enacting H.R. 5570 would increase revenues by less than \$500,000 a year in fiscal years 2009 through 2016. (Based on information from DHS, CBO anticipates that the department would issue the regulations required by the bill by January 1, 2009.)

The Department of State also charges a \$45 security surcharge for such visas and, depending on the type of petition, may charge additional fees for fingerprinting or affidavits of support. In addition, DHS collects a fee of \$375 to process the visa applications submitted by religious workers and their dependents. All of those fees are classified as offsetting collections (for the Department of State) or offsetting receipts (for DHS) and are retained and spent by the departments. CBO estimates the net budgetary effect of those increased collections would be less than \$500,000 a year.

Finally, some of the additional immigrants admitted under this legislation could become eligible for certain federal benefits, but CBO expects that any increase in direct spending for benefit programs would not be significant over the 2009-2018 period.

The CBO staff contacts for this estimate are Mark Grabowicz (for DHS's costs), and Sunita D'Monte (for the Department of State's costs). This estimate was approved by Peter H. Fontaine, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.